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ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to place the teaching of writing as a high priority in an elementary school; allow children more opportunities to share their writing; and assist teachers in their knowledge of teaching writing, especially through the writing process. Children's writing was given high visibility through the use of monthly "young authors" displays, encouragement of classroom and hallway displays, and two editions of a literary magazine. In addition, a publishing center was set up for fourth graders, an after-school writer's club was formed for third and fourth graders, a young author's picnic was held at the end of the year, and a prize-winning teenage author spent half a day in the school giving assemblies and working with students. Teachers were assisted through a district-sponsored graduate course in the teaching of writing plus periodic articles and "idea sheets" that were circulated. Results indicated a higher priority for writing in the school. Teachers saw children's pride when their efforts were displayed and "published" in a literary magazine or in book form. The visiting teenage author was inspiring to both children and adults while the public celebration of the writing efforts was enjoyed by the entire school community. (Four tables of data are included; teachers' needs assessment, questionnaires, a newspaper announcement, announcements and title pages for the literary magazine, and a sample announcement for the writing club are attached.) (91 references) (RS)

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Cluster 36

A Practicum II Report presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

July, 1992

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Michael E. Friedberg

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This practicum report was submitted by Wendy L. Brand under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

July 14 1992
Date of Final Approval of Report

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This writer would like to thank the children, staff, and administration at PV North Elementary School for their assistance in the implementation of this practicum. Thank you to the parent volunteers who helped with the typing of the literary magazine and with the publishing center. Thanks also goes to our Reading Specialist, Nancy Huston who coordinated the efforts of the parents at the publishing center.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... iv

LIST OF TABLES..... v

ABSTRACT..... vi

Chapter

I INTRODUCTION..... 1

Description of Work Setting and Community. 1
Writer's Work Setting and Role..... 2

II STUDY OF THE PROBLEM..... 4

Problem Description..... 4
Problem Documentation..... 5
Causative Analysis..... 11
Relationship of the Problem
to the Literature..... 13

III ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION
INSTRUMENTS..... 20

Goals and Expectations..... 20
Performance Objectives..... 20
Measurement of Objectives..... 22
Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events. 24

IV SOLUTION STRATEGY..... 25
Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions.... 25
Description for Solution Selected..... 32
Report of Action Taken..... 33

V RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....44

Results.....44
Discussion.....55
Recommendations.....58
Dissemination.....60

REFERENCES..... 62

Appendices Page

A TEACHERS' NEEDS ASSESSMENT.....70

B TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE.....72

C CHILDREN'S QUESTIONNAIRE.....74

D PROCESS WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE.....76

E NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENT.....78

F LITERARY MAGAZINE ANNOUNCEMENTS.....81

G TITLE PAGES OF THE LITERARY MAGAZINE.....84

H SAMPLE OF ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE WRITING CLUB.....87

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1 What subject do you think is most important to your teacher?(baseline data).....9

2 Contents of Curriculum Guide, Grade One.....10

3 Numbers of items in hallway displays.....46

4 What subject do you think is most important to your teacher?(evaluation).....53

ABSTRACT

Expanding Writing Opportunities for Elementary Students and Assisting Teachers' Knowledge of the Writing Process. Brand, Wendy L., 1992: Practicum II Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Writing / Writing Instruction / Process writing / Language Arts / Elementary Education

This practicum was designed to place the teaching of writing as a high priority in the elementary school in which this practicum was implemented, allow children more opportunities to share their writing, and assist teachers in their knowledge of teaching writing, especially through the writing process.

Children's writing was given high visibility through the use of monthly "Young Authors" displays, encouragement of classroom and hallway displays, and two editions of a literary magazine. In addition, a publishing center was set up for Fourth Graders, an after-school Writer's Club was formed for Third and Fourth Graders, a Young Authors Picnic was held at the end of the year, and a prize winning teenaged author spent half a day in the school giving assemblies and working with students.

Teachers were assisted in their knowledge of writing instruction through the offering of a district-sponsored graduate course in the teaching of writing plus periodic articles and "Idea sheets" that were circulated.

The results of the practicum were positive with the primary goals and objectives achieved. An analysis of the results indicated a higher priority for writing has been infused in the school. Teachers saw the pride that the children showed when their efforts were displayed and "published" in a literary magazine or in book form. The visiting teenaged author was very inspiring to both children and adults while the public celebration of the writing efforts were enjoyed by the entire school community of parents, children, and teachers.

This practicum contains specific activities to enhance the teaching and display of children's writing. The references used by the writer will guide anyone who wishes to implement a program designed to place more emphasis on writing in the elementary school.

Permission Statement

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Work Setting and Community

This practicum was conducted in an elementary school in a small public school system located in a small suburban town of a Mid-Atlantic state.

The school district has a population of approximately 2,500 students in two K-4 elementary schools, one 5-7 middle school and one 8-12 high school. Socioeconomically, the population within the school district ranges from lower to middle income, with the majority of the population white, middle class. Since there lately has been much development of land in terms of housing, the school district is expecting rapid growth in the near future. Until very recently, the population has remained stable with families tending to stay in the area and many of the more experienced teachers in the district have had children of former students in their classes. The district itself has virtually no industry and homeowners, often feeling overburdened with taxes, demand a large measure of accountability from the schools. Out of 42 school districts in the two-county area, the district is 40th in terms of teacher salaries.

Despite attempts by district personnel to alleviate the situation, there is a great feeling of rivalry, maintained

by the parents, between the two elementary schools. The North building is seen by many in the community to have inferior facilities and programs while the South building, being newer, has better facilities and more equipment such as computers and software. There is a discrepancy in the socioeconomic character of the constituency of the two schools, with the South building having a slightly more affluent population. This socioeconomic discrepancy has been the rationale for the difference in facilities and resources between the two schools.

The school district prides itself on providing a good fundamental, basic education for all of its children. Innovations are few and traditional methods are employed by most of the teachers. Parents, as well as the majority of the staff are comfortable with the status quo. The most recent modernization has been the gradual purchase of computers for each elementary classroom and computer labs in the high school, the middle school, and the South building.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is one of four First Grade teachers in the North building. In addition to one special education class, there are presently five sections of half-day Kindergartens, four sections of First, and five sections each of Second, Third, and Fourth Grades in the school, bringing the population of the school to approximately 550 students.

All teachers in the district are required to teach subject matter specified in the curriculum guide designed for the grade level to which the teacher has been assigned. For the elementary grades, the subjects to be taught by the classroom teacher are reading, handwriting, spelling, language arts, arithmetic, social studies, science, and health. There is a reading specialist in each building to oversee the reading program and a curriculum coordinator for the district; however, principals are responsible for the educational program of the children in their individual buildings.

The writer's background and training include a master's degree in early childhood, two years teaching private preschool and 18 years' experience in the public schools, ranging from guidance to Kindergarten, First, and Second grades. Fifteen years have been spent teaching in this particular school district with the first ten years spent in Kindergarten. The writer has been teaching First Grade for six years, the first two years as the teacher of a Developmental First Grade and, when the Developmental First was disbanded, three years as the teacher of the gifted/high achieving section. Since the high achieving section was discontinued, professional responsibility this year was as a teacher of a heterogeneous class of 24 First Graders whose abilities ranged from recognition of four letters of the alphabet to reading on the 3.2 level.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

There had been a low priority given to the teaching of writing in most of the classrooms in the K-4 elementary school in which this writer teaches and few occasions for children to experience authentic writing opportunities. Most teachers taught writing by following the English textbook, thus allowing little time for other writing activities. There was an overemphasis on teaching mechanics and writing conventions since those skills are easiest to grade objectively. Teachers were familiar with the language of process writing - prewriting, writing, revising, editing, publishing - but usually taught in a lockstep, "it's Wednesday, time to revise" approach, not realizing that writing is a recursive process. (California State Department of Education, 1986)

Much of the writing done by the children corresponded to one of two patterns: 1) "creative writing" in which a story starter, a sentence or title about which the children must write, is given or 2) report writing where an outline is filled in and then written in narrative form. Children rarely experienced authentic writing opportunities in most

of the classes in the school. By authentic, this writer concurs with the teacher interviewed in More Than Stories: the Range of Children's Writing (Newkirk, 1989, p. 164) who defines authentic writing as writing that "corresponds to the purposes for which adult societies use language." In brief, there were inadequate opportunities for children to experience authentic writing or be taught the skills necessary to become proficient writers.

Problem Documentation

Baseline data supporting this problem was gathered during the spring of 1991. Evidence was supported by observations, interviews, a needs assessment, questionnaires, student work and study of the curriculum guides.

During a week in May, 1991, children's work displayed in the hallway was counted and it was noted that the pieces of non-writing work outnumbered children's writing 476-74. Three classrooms out of 22 had writing displayed, with writing defined as more than 5 words written consecutively since some of the work displayed had one and two word labels on them. It was clear that the work displayed was all written to satisfy teacher-directed topics.

At the May Home and School meeting, the parents who typed the monthly newsletters expressed disappointment that so few children had contributed to the page of children's

writing that was set aside for each newsletter. There had been only two contributions during the month of March and none for April or May.

A needs assessment concerning writing was sent to the other 21 classroom teachers and 11 teachers responded. (See Appendix A) Although seven teachers requested help with some part of the writing process, only one of those 11 teachers had any writing of their children's displayed in the hall at any time during the months of April or May when the baseline data was being collected.

An additional questionnaire was sent to the seven teachers who requested help (see Appendix B) and of the seven, only one teacher reported that her children wrote more than once a week and she reported this with an additional comment: "if journals count."

At this point it is necessary to question the significance of the questionnaire and the previous needs assessment. Like all self-reporting devices, they suffer from a few constraints. For instance, why did only 11 teachers out of 21 send back the original needs assessment? Did they feel overburdened with work and consider it was a non-essential item that could be ignored? Did they resent being asked about their teaching by a non-administrative colleague? Were they afraid to admit not having knowledge about a curricular area? One teacher who originally answered that he needed no help with his teaching of writing was very

hostile about answering and said that he "didn't like being checked up on." Could he be verbalizing an opinion that more tactful teachers felt and demonstrated by not responding? How accurate are the teachers who responded that they felt no need for help with writing in their classroom? Do they not need help because they have a strong writing component or do they not want help because it is not a priority of theirs? On the other hand, do they not realize that they need help in this area? One of the teachers is known to have a strong writing program but the other three who responded but declined help are not known to teach writing in more than a cursory manner. In fact, this writer's child had one of the teachers who declined help and the child reported that this teacher did not teach writing but simply gave writing assignments. This sheds doubt on the reliability of both the needs assessment and the questionnaire.

Upon interviewing both the Superintendent and the Curriculum Coordinator who are new to our schools as of the 1990-91 school year, both of them felt that the writing program needed special attention. The Curriculum Coordinator sent a memo to the elementary staff on June 6, 1991 stating that "we would like to train all Grade 1 to 6 teachers in writing over the next two or three years."

Informal comments collected in the faculty room on the subject of writing were uniformly negative. These were some typical comments collected and most of the teachers present

seemed to endorse the sentiments expressed.

"My kids can't even write a sentence, how can they write a story." (First Grade teacher).

"I have a whole box of story starters in my classroom that the kids can use whenever they want to but nobody seems to bother." (Second Grade teacher)

"After teaching everything else I have to, how can I fit it in?" (Third Grade teacher)

"We don't get to the chapter on writing until May and by that time nobody wants to do anything." (Fourth Grade teacher)

"My kids write all the time. They have to copy a poem from the board every day." (Second Grade teacher)

During May, 1991 a questionnaire was administered by this writer to ten classrooms of students to determine how important they thought writing was to their teachers. (See Appendix C.) Eight curricular areas were specified and of the 175 usable responses, only 8 children said that writing was the most important subject for their teacher. Overall, children reported that writing was the seventh most important subject, with English being the only subject lower in priority than writing. Of the 175 children who responded, it was seen that only 46 children put writing as one of the three most important subjects. Table 1 displays the results of this questionnaire.

Table 1

What subject do you think is most important to your teacher?

Subject	Number of children responding=175 Most important	Second	Third
Reading	51	30	28
Spelling	31	35	26
Math	29	22	20
Social Studies	23	18	19
Handwriting	16	20	17
Science	12	16	16
Writing	8	13	25
English	3	20	19
Others (written in)	4	0	4

A perusal of the curriculum guides for Grades 1-4 showed incomplete attention given to the subject of writing as compared to other subjects. A closer study of the curriculum guide for Grade 1 (1986) will demonstrate that the teaching of writing has a low priority in the elementary schools in the district. Table 2 shows how many pages are devoted to delineating objectives, content, expected level of achievement, procedures for evaluation, and resources used for each subject required to be taught at the First

Grade level.

Table 2

Contents of Curriculum Guide, Grade One

Subject	Number of pages
Handwriting	5
Spelling	4
Social Studies	5
Mathematics	7
Science	7
Reading	14
Language Arts*	6
Art	3
Library Instruction	5
Health	7
Physical Education	5
Music	5

*Includes grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, vocabulary skills, literature, oral language, listening, and written expression.

Of the 14 Language Arts objectives, two are devoted to writing: students will participate in writing a group story and students will begin to compose simple stories. Further elaboration of these objectives use a total of 25 words.

There is no expected level of achievement for individual writing specified in the First Grade curriculum.

Although there were organized extra-curricular sports programs, an after-school art club, a week-end computer club, chorus and instrumental lessons, there was no extra-curricular outlet at the elementary level for children who enjoy writing. Therefore the children viewed writing as a school assignment, only to be done during English class, and not as an enjoyable activity in its own right.

Causative Analysis

It is the writer's belief that there were four main causes of the problem.

The principal requests math scores, the reading specialist requests reading scores, but writing samples, although required for the students' cumulative records, were not read by any administrative personnel. Therefore, in the eyes of the teachers, they were of limited value and, by extension, other subjects needed more attention.

Writing was not celebrated in any public way. There was no school-wide publishing effort, no assembly to congratulate child authors as there was to applaud the best child athletes, art students, music students, and library helpers. Even children who read books to win pizza and ice cream treats were applauded but those who excel in writing

were forgotten when it comes to plaudits by the school community. Therefore, the children reasoned that since adults didn't ascribe any special value to writing, it must not be important.

Few teachers had had inservice or graduate courses in writing. Although the English book teachers' manual was explicit about teaching writing through the writing process, most teachers were uncomfortable teaching a subject for which they had not been trained. For example, the Third Grade teachers' manual of the language arts basal series used by the district (Haley-James & Stewig, 1983) implies a step-by-step method of writing which does not have children write until page 73, tells teachers to "allow students suitable time to write" but then assumes all children will draft, then revise, then proofread, then publish, all on four successive days. As Donald Graves points out in his classic work on process writing, Writing: Teachers and Children at Work (1983), "The teaching of writing demands the control of two crafts, teaching and writing. They can neither be avoided, nor separated. The writer who knows the craft of writing can't walk into a room and work with students unless there is some understanding of the craft of teaching. Neither can teachers who have not wrestled with writing, effectively teach the writer's craft." (p. 5-6)

None of the standardized tests that the children take have a writing component. Teachers generally spend the bulk

of their time teaching material for which the children will be responsible on the tests. Evaluation of writing is a debated subject and not as easily scored as skills such as grammar and mechanics. (Najimy, 1981)

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Review of the literature gives evidence of a lack of emphasis on writing instruction.

Shaw (1985) discusses the problems associated with the teaching of writing in the elementary school. "Until recently, writing instruction in elementary schools has taken place in an environment best described as hostile." (p. 16) The study of legislative and judicial records in 18 states showed that none had a specific writing requirement. Curriculum guides in seven different districts showed a low priority for writing, and national standardized tests did not include writing samples; therefore the teachers felt that teaching writing did not directly influence high test scores which are so valued by administrators. Textbooks by ten different publishers showed an overwhelming reliance on grammar and mechanics with the last chapter in every text devoted to writing. Although he notes a recent trend of interest in writing as reflected in journal articles and publishers' textbooks, it is well known that practice in many school districts lags behind trends marked in the academic journals.

Hillocks (1987) raises some concerns about the practices of teachers of writing at the elementary level. His studies (1986a) agree with Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer (1963) that show that the study of grammar has no positive effect on writing. Indeed, grammar exercises may have a deleterious effect if the study of grammar takes time away from writing. Hillocks (1987) champions the "inquiry teaching" method of the teaching of writing while he is critical of the method of process writing. However, as Applebee (1986) demonstrates, the inquiry or "environmental" method that Hillocks advocates is simply a version of the process approach.

Lapointe (1986) reports on the assessment of writing skills and he says that the "level of achievement is discouraging." (p. 137) He claims that there is "some confusion on the issues of the importance of writing, effective techniques for teaching writing, and students' perceptions of clear purpose and direction in writing." (p. 138)

Holdaway (1979) decries the "neglect and sterility centred around the same general philosophical mistakes as were made with reading -- the isolation of related skills in subject compartments, and the concentration of teaching effort on superficial, perceptual and mechanical aspects rather than on integrated function." (p. 26)

Kirby, Latta and Vinz (1988) describe schools which use

writing as "a medium for learning" (p. 718). However, they caution schools and teachers who might tend to view "the writing process" as the curriculum, as static content to be memorized. They remind the reader that "writing processes involve the dynamic relationships between writers and their texts" (p. 719), and "an interactive relation between writers and teachers" (p. 720).

Other literature gives evidence to the lack of actual instruction in writing.

Bizzell (1986) and Sulzby, Teale and Kamberelis (1989) note that teacher's guidance is needed if children's writing is going to improve. Direct teaching can take the form of the traditional whole-group teaching method, individual conferences as Graves (1983, 1985, 1991) advocates or a combination of the two as Calkins (1983, 1986) and Turbill (1982) mention. Critics of "free writing" or "process writing" correctly censure teachers who believe they are teaching writing by simply evaluating the writing produced by children permitted to write about their own topics. The California State Department of Education's Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program (1986, p. 4)) reports that increasing the number of writing opportunities without providing appropriate instruction is not sufficient for significant improvement of writing skills. Maimon (1988) explains that teachers must intervene in student's work-in-progress to effectively help the student. Although many

proponents of the process approach to writing advocate peer editing (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988) and peer conferencing (Calkins, 1986; Graves & Stuart, 1985; Graves, 1983; Turbill, 1982), Linden and Whimbey (1990) assert that students can not teach themselves to write simply by reading their writing to peers.

Gere (1986) and Gage (1986) report with dismay the view that stresses mechanics, neat handwriting and spelling, and disregards content and ideas. Mechanics and spelling are skills that can be objectively evaluated and many teachers do not feel qualified to assess the material itself. When teachers stress the drilling of isolated skills, it means that the children have less time to actually write. (Graves and Stuart, 1985) As Suhor (1984, p. 85) insists, "[nothing] can substitute for the actual experience of writing."

The literature also gives evidence that children do not have enough opportunities or enough time to write.

Tway (1984) deplores the lack of time available for writing in schools. "School class periods are not conducive to any but the most perfunctory kinds of writing." (p. 1) Hiebert notes (Sulzby, 1992) that "[in school] writing was defined narrowly as spelling or creative writing where teachers specify topics." (p. 290)

Roop (1990) discusses how he, as a writer, must have the time to allow random elements to mix before he actually sits down to write, a kind of incubation period for ideas, a

self-initiated pre-writing activity.

Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986) clearly describe a workshop process approach that demands a lot of time for the children to write, "the luxury of time", as Calkins gracefully describes it. (p. 23) This workshop approach is also recommended in the Position Statement for writing endorsed by the National Council of Teachers of English. (1983) Butler and Turbill (1987) also insist on adequate time for all steps of the writing process, but no definition of "adequate" is given. Unfortunately, this tends to lead to the lockstep practice of "drafting on Monday, revision on Tuesday, editing on Wednesday".

Daniels and Zemelman (1985) flatly assert that you need to learn writing by writing and that practice is absolutely necessary. Clark (1987) maintains that daily writing helps students grow in all areas of language study and Cochrane, Cochrane, Scalena and Buchanan (1984) emphasize that children must be allowed daily opportunities to write about topics that reflect their interests and concerns.

Jenkinson (1988) and Harste (1990) both stress that good writing takes time and practice, while Leggo (1990) and Haley-James (1981) emphasize the need for frequent opportunities for practice of different kinds of writing at various times during the day. Creative writing on Friday afternoon is not sufficient time to practice the complex task that communication through writing involves. As Brandt

(1985) notes, "adults might be more comfortable with writing if our teachers had expected us to write repeatedly." (p.3)

The literature reveals several causes for the problem.

Shaw (1985) mentions that of the 18 state judicial and legislative records he studied, none of them had a specific writing requirement. He also found curricular guidelines of the seven districts in his study were too vague and general to be of much help to teachers who wanted to teach writing.

High standardized tests scores were prized by administrators and the public, and teaching for these tests was antithetical to teaching writing because of their emphasis on convergent thinking and mechanical skills. (Graves and Stuart, 1985; Shaw, 1985)

Language arts textbooks have tended to emphasize grammar instruction (Graves & Stuart and Shaw) even though there has been much research to show that grammar study does not contribute to the quality of writing. (Hillocks, 1987) As Hillocks says, "If formal grammatical knowledge is used at all, it is probably used at the level of editing or proofreading, levels that can exercise little or no control over purpose, plans, content, and style." (p. 76)

Calkins (1986) notes the vicious cycle in schools of children not wanting to write because "we in schools set up roadblocks to stifle the natural and enduring reasons to write." (p. 4)

Shaw (1985) and Graves (1978) mentioned that graduate

courses were not readily available for the teachers who need them to teach writing. Although Calkins and Harwayne (1987) refer to many courses and workshops for teachers to learn to teach writing, school districts are cutting back on money to send teachers to conferences and graduate credit courses in writing are not as readily available as video courses or "make-it, take-it" workshops given within the district by the local colleges and universities.

Many teachers are uncomfortable with the student-centered approach that the writing process demands and are more comfortable with the didactic teaching of grammar and attendant terminology, says Daniels and Zemelman (1985). Haley-James (1981) claims that this is a result of the Back to Basics movement of the 1970's which still has a strong following in some of the more traditional school districts such as the one under discussion in this report.

Daniels and Zemelman (1985) also realize that elementary teachers feel overburdened with teaching all other areas of the curriculum and do not feel they can "fit in" the teaching of writing. Hilderbrand (1991) observes that principals seldom request to see children's writing although they may keep careful accounts of math and reading scores; teachers teach what is valued in their environment.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The following goals and objectives were projected for this practicum:

The goal of the writer is for the children to become more fluent writers and for the teachers to expand their knowledge of the writing process in order to teach writing more profitably. Specific objectives include providing greater opportunities for children to write and display their writing publicly and providing opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge about the writing process.

Performance Objectives

The following performance objectives were projected for this practicum:

Objective 1: By the end of the school-year implementation period, students will have more of their writing displayed in the school. Evaluation will be formative, with the expectation being that a greater amount of children's writing will be displayed as the year continues. The standard of achievement is that by the last month of implementation, 50% of student-displayed work in

the hallways will be children's writing.

Objective 2: Students will write in many different styles and formats as exhibited in various publications and writing activities. Evaluation will be by counting the number of children who submit material for publication and standard of achievement will be that 50% of the children in grades 1-4 will contribute at least one piece of writing for publication or display by the end of the school year.

Objective 3: Teachers will report an increased understanding of the writing process as evidenced through open-ended interviews, a questionnaire, and/or learning logs kept by some of the teachers. The standard of achievement will be that all of the responding teachers will report an increased understanding of diverse components of the writing process and how they relate to the teaching of writing.

Objective 4: Teachers will demonstrate an understanding of a child's sense of "ownership" in the written work by displaying more student-initiated writing. Evidence will be obtained by observation of bulletin boards and displays within the classrooms and the standard of achievement will be that half of the teachers will display examples of writing that is student-initiated.

Objective 5: Children will recognize the importance of writing in the school as evidenced by a questionnaire showing that a greater percentage of children acknowledge the value of writing than they did in the spring of 1991.

Measurement of Objectives

Objective 1 was measured by counting all of the pieces of student work that were displayed in the hallways of the school on a given day. Data for evaluation was taken at four times during the year: in November, January, March, and May. The expectation was that as the teachers learned more about the writing process, there would be a greater emphasis on children's writing and this would be reflected in the amount of written work displayed. The desired outcome was that by the last evaluation period, at least 50% of the work displayed would be students' writing.

Objective 2 was measured by counting the number of children who submitted work for publication outside of regular classroom assignments. Evaluation was ongoing since the children were counted all during the year. Desired outcome was that by the end of the year, 50% of the children registered in Grades 1-4 would have submitted writing for publication or display outside of whole-class assignments.

Objective 3 was measured by ascertaining the degree of confidence that the teachers had in their teaching of writing. Evaluation was during December and at the end of

the school year through the use of open-ended interviews, a questionnaire (see Appendix D), and in some cases, the use of learning logs or journals. The desired level of achievement was that all responding teachers would express more confidence in their ability to teach writing because of an increase in their knowledge of the writing process.

Objective 4 was measured by observation and enumeration of student writing on bulletin boards and displays within the classrooms. The standard of achievement was that half of the teachers in the school would display examples of writing that is student-initiated during the evaluation period in May.

Objective 5 was measured by having the children complete a questionnaire (Appendix C) that asks them to choose which subjects their teachers think are of first, second, and third importance. The desired behavior was that 50% of the children polled will report that their teacher values writing in one of the top three positions of importance. The expectation is that with the added emphasis on writing in the school, the greater recognition of student authors, and the increased confidence of teachers in their knowledge of the writing process, children would credit writing as having a more important place in the curriculum and thus of more value to their teachers.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

A journal was kept during the implementation period which was the school year of 1991-92. Events that were not anticipated were recorded.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

There was a low priority given to the teaching of writing in most of the classrooms in the K-4 elementary school in which this writer teaches and few occasions for children to experience authentic writing opportunities. Although writing was not ignored as a curricular area, other areas of the curriculum seemed to have been given much more value by the teachers and the children.

There has been a great deal of interest in the past few years concerning the teaching of writing in the elementary schools. The work of Donald Graves and Lucy Calkins has been especially provocative and stimulating to teachers who had been previously told that the formal teaching of what used to be called "composition" must wait until high school. After Janet Emig's (1969) work focusing on the processes that senior high school student writers used as they composed, came the interest of Graves (1973) in the writing processes of second grade children. These studies were unique because instead of concentrating on the behaviors of teachers that were conducive to quality writing, these two researchers focused on the development of the procedure that individual student writers went through in order to

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accomplish their goal of a written result. In other words, Emig and Graves were more interested in the process of writing than the finished product; thereby the term "process writing" came into the literature.

Many different writers have added to the tenets of process writing, (also called "the writing process" or "writing-in-process") among them Parry and Hornsby (1985), Harste, Short, and Burke (1988), Strickland and Morrow (1989), Newman (1984), Newkirk (1989), all with their own variations on the theme. Collerson (1988) however, delineates the elements that most teachers and researchers would consider central to the writing process.

1. Writing is treated as a process with some sort of rehearsal for writing (prewriting, brainstorming), drafting (writing), revision, editing (proofreading) and often ending with some means of publication. It has been shown that this process is not a linear progression but is recursive (Applebee, 1986; California State Department of Education, 1986).

2. Writing is to be shared while it is in progress. Usually this is in the form of a conference, either an individual one with the teacher (Graves, 1983), an individual one with a friend (Harste, Short & Burke, 1988) or group conferences (Gordon, 1984; Turbill, 1982) which are sometimes called "sharing" or "share time."

3. The choice of topic belongs to the child. The

teacher may set broad parameters such as specifying a genre (Butler & Turbill, 1987; Collerson, 1988) but the child has ultimate control over each step of the writing process. Some teachers seem to prefer tightly focused pieces that evoke the emotions (Calkins, 1986) or personal experiences (Gordon, 1984), while some teachers, especially those of the youngest writers (Clay, 1975; Taylor, 1983) note that the children tend to prefer stories and personal narratives.

4. Children write every day and for many different purposes: personal narratives, fiction, informational articles, essays, poetry, letters, journals, learning logs, lists, messages, notes. Writing is authentic, that is, it corresponds to real concerns of the children, not make-believe exercises such as writing to the Three Bears or other practice activities that are the favorites of language arts texts.

Other elements such as invented spelling (Clay, 1975; Newman, 1984; Taylor, 1983), access to peers while writing (Calkins, 1983; Calkins & Harwayne, 1987), book publishing, (Archibald, 1984; Suid & Lincoln 1989; Watson, 1987) and an author's chair (Harste, Short & Burke, 1988) are often present, but the above four attributes are the most necessary ingredients in a writing process approach.

Keeping the above discussion in mind, this writer notes that few of the necessary elements of process writing are occurring in this writer's school. Among others, Graves

(1978, 1983), Graves and Stuart (1985), Calkins (1983, 1986) and Butler and Turbill (1987) advocate a workshop approach to the writing process where the children have large amounts of time in which to write, a time that "will encompass all of the language arts." (Calkins, 1986, p. 25) Although Sudol and Sudol (1991) discuss drawbacks to the writing workshop, this writer has found that, for the most part, its effectiveness in producing quality writing outweighs the disadvantages. Another excellent source for teachers who would rather consult the experiences of classroom teachers instead of researchers such as Graves and Calkins, is Gordon's book (1984) which presents experiences of teachers who undertook the transformation of their classrooms into writers' workshops.

Graves (1991), McVitty (1986) and Thaiss (1986) are just a few of the writers that suggest integration of the subjects and writing across the curriculum. This integration would alleviate many of the problems that Peg Sudol (1991) faced in her description of obstacles encountered when she attempted to institute the writing workshop.

Jenkinson (1988), Pradl and Mayher (1985), Clark (1987), Harste, Short and Burke (1988) and Maimon (1988) are among the writers who recommend journal writing. Learning logs as discussed by Harste, Short and Burke (1988), Suid and Lincoln (1989) and Tway (1984) are similar to journals, but whereas the former emphasizes what learning took place

from the perspective of the student, the latter is usually concerned with feelings and impressions.

Wallace (1985) and Maimon (1988) propose the use of a computer for word processing and for proofreading. It is noted, however, that this is helpful for only a few children at a time unless the school has a computer lab.

Archibald, Spina, Krate, & Flinn (1986), Frank (1979), Suid and Lincoln (1989), Geuder, Harvey, Wager, and Loyd (1974), Watson (1987) and Nathan, Temple, Juntunen & Temple give specific writing activities for the classroom. The risk inherent in following these ideas is that the writing loses its authenticity and often becomes one more clever exercise. Judicious and infrequent sampling of these activities is recommended by this writer although occasional use can sometimes reinvigorate a student's or a class's flagging interest in writing, especially towards the end of the school year.

Some writers tend to focus on teaching writing strategies. Linden and Whimbey (1990) and O'Hare (1973) advise the teaching of sentence combining to improve the writing of middle grade children. Nathan, Temple, Juntunen & Temple (1989) discuss strategies for sentence combining with younger children that may be effective.

Lloyd's (1987) delightful compilation of vignettes of how professional writers write can demonstrate to children the various options open to them. Graves (1989a, 1989b)

discusses various approaches open to teachers who want their children to experience working in a variety of forms.

Calkins and Harwayne (1987) and Petrosky (1986) as well as the California State Department of Education publication (1986) discuss the inservicing of teachers as an important step for them to teach the writing process. Calkins (1986) and Graves (1978) emphasize the need for teachers to write also so that they can experience the frustrations as well as the feelings of satisfaction that their children are encountering as they write.

Tiedt (1975), Tompkins and Camp (1988), and O'Hare (1973) all elaborate on techniques to teach writing such as expanding sentences, brainstorming and clustering, or sentence combining but Thaiss and Suhor (1984) and Farr (1984) insist that such techniques are better taught within the context of the writing as the particular writer needs it, either individually or in a small group. Wagner (1985) suggests that teachers should use a variety of writing activities that encourage the use of various modes of writing.

Some literature is specifically designed to produce published works. Dubrovin (1984) addresses young authors who want to write fiction and discusses such topics as setting, characters, leads and plot. Melton (1985) describes his workshops which teach children and adults to write and illustrate their own books and suggests that putting

children's published books in the library would add to the celebration of children as authors. In addition, Hilderbrand (1991) mentions a large bulletin board to display shorter pieces of children's writing whereas Tiedt (1975) mentions publishing student work in a class booklet. Hilderbrand (1991) also refers to the publication of a literary magazine with two issues, one intermediate and one primary, organized and published with the help of parent volunteers. Dow (1985) and Spina (1984) describe Young Authors Conferences as a way to celebrate children as authors as well as entice other children to write. However, Ellis (1988) warns overzealous parents and teachers of the emotional damage that can be done when children attempt to submit work for professional publication.

Other ideas that were explored include the following:

A graduate level course in writing could be offered to the teachers within the school district.

For teachers who are unable to attend a graduate course, handouts and articles pertinent to the writing process could be distributed.

A school-wide publishing center could be set up with the help of the Home and School Association.

An after-school Writers' Club modeled on the existing Art and Computer clubs could be offered to Third and Fourth Grade students interested in writing.

Local shop and business owners could be contacted about

having student writing displayed in their places of business.

Description for Solution Selected

A graduate level course in writing was offered to the teachers within the school district, taught by the Curriculum Coordinator and assisted by this writer. In order to attract as many teachers as possible, it was offered at the district administration building soon after the school day so that travel time would be minimized.

For teachers who were unable to attend the graduate course, pertinent articles and "Idea Sheets" concerning the writing process were distributed.

A literary magazine of children's writing was organized and published with the help of parent volunteers. An intermediate level issue was distributed in January and a primary level issue in June.

An after-school Writing Club was offered to Third and Fourth Grade students interested in writing. A maximum of 16 children were enrolled with a new enrollment group accepted at the beginning of each of the four marking periods.

A bulletin board near the office entitled "Young Authors" was installed and student authors were highlighted. The contents were changed once a month.

A Young Authors conference with a professional writer of children's stories as keynote speaker was planned for the

spring. Instead, a prize-winning teenaged author spent half a day in the school giving assemblies, speaking to classes and working with children.

The objectives of this practicum succeeded because of four main factors:

The principal declared the 1991-92 school year as "The Year of the Young Author" and summarized this section of this practicum as "his goals" for the school as required by the superintendent.

The district Curriculum Coordinator is a proponent of the writing process and was encouraging as a helpful resource person.

Many teacher magazines often offer suggestions for writing and the teachers know it is currently a popular topic in education.

The parents in the Home and School Association expressed interest in the goals of this practicum and to that end offered to help type the submissions to the literary magazine and pledged $500 towards the Young Authors conference.

Report of Action Taken

There were certain procedures that had to be followed prior to implementation.

1. This proposal was shared with the Reading Specialist, the Curriculum Coordinator, and the Principal to

obtain approval.

2. Meeting dates for district committees were checked so that the most convenient day of the week for the Writing Club could be ascertained.

3. Permission from the principal to hold a Young Authors conference at the school was obtained.

4. Research into the availability and the cost of obtaining a children's author for the Young Authors conference was done.

The writer implemented in the following manner to fulfill the objectives of the practicum:

August 29-30

Announcement to teachers concerning the literary magazine and the bulletin board for selected children's writing was made at the first school faculty meeting. At the request of the principal, an article was written and sent to local newspaper describing "The Year of the Young Author" at the school. (See Appendix E.)

Month of September

A Writing Club for Third and Fourth Graders (maximum of 15) to meet weekly, one day a week, from 3:30 to 5:00 was announced. All Third and Fourth Grade students received notices to take home explaining the Writing Club and the

days and times. At the principal's recommendation, each student was charged $15 a marking period for the following reasons: 1) He was afraid it might be seen as a "babysitting" service if no fee was charged and 2) teachers who had started or might want to start other clubs would probably want to charge a fee and he wanted to avoid comparisons of fees, as much as possible. I told teachers to report the names of children who they knew were interested but could not afford the fee since I would offer "scholarships" to these students. Nine children signed up for the first marking period.

This writer assisted in teaching a Penn State graduate course in writing scheduled from September 25 to December 11, 4:00-6:30 at the district administration building and taught by the Curriculum Coordinator.

Arrangements were made for the collection of student writing for the bulletin boards near the office. Although it was anticipated that each student author highlighted would have their picture and short biographical sketch included, this was eliminated to permit more student work to be featured.

Initial contact with a professional children's author to arrange the date for the Young Author's Conference was planned but there were no children's authors in the area who would come to speak for the money available. Instead, a 19 year old university student who had won many local, state,

and national writing contests as well as having a book published when she was 16, was contacted and schedules were discussed. Since she would be at school until the middle of May except for a winter break from Christmas until the middle of January, this limited the days she would be available. A tentative agenda was discussed.

Month of October

The graduate level writing course was continued on Wednesdays, the Writing Club met on Thursdays, and the first of a series of articles and "Idea Sheets" were distributed to teachers who expressed a need for help in various parts of the writing process but were unable to take the graduate course. The articles and "Idea Sheets" were first sent to the principal and he sent them out under his auspices. The first "Idea Sheet" sent were copies of pages 18 and 19 from If You're Trying to Teach Kids How to Write, You've Gotta Have This Book! by Marjorie Frank (1979).

The bulletin board display was changed to highlight new student authors with classroom teachers submitting the stories to be displayed.

The organization of the intermediate (Grades Three and Four) issue of the literary magazine was started. A school-wide contest was announced for a name and pictures to go on the front of the magazine. (See Appendix F.)

Month of November

The graduate level course continued and the Writing Club continued with a new session of the club beginning with the second marking period which started on November 13. This writer asked that continuing members pay $12 and new members pay $15. All of the children from the first marking period Club signed up with an additional two children, making a total of 11 children in Writing Club for the second marking period. The bulletin board display highlighting new student authors was changed.

A publishing center staffed by parent volunteers was started under the coordination of the Reading Specialist. Because of the limited number of volunteers, it was decided that each of the 108 Fourth Graders would be given the opportunity to submit one story for publication during the school year. Congratulations to the authors of the books published during each week of the school year were broadcast during morning announcements.

Assistance with the teaching of the graduate course was continued.

A brief article by Robert E. Slavin entitled "Cooperative Learning, Cooperative Writing" (no other information concerning publication was available) was sent to the teachers.

Month of December

Bulletin board displays were changed, the Writing Club continued, and the last session of the graduate course for teachers occurred. Informal open-ended interviews with the members of the class were conducted.

Submissions for publication in the intermediate edition of the literary magazine were collected from the Third and Fourth grade students. Announcement of the contest winners for the title and the title page artwork were done at an assembly with prizes of coupons for ice cream from the school cafeteria awarded. Submissions for the literary magazine were sent to the parent volunteer typist and artwork was copied and reduced to fit the pages.

Fifth graders from the middle school whose teachers were members of the graduate writing course came to the school to present Christmas books they had written for the First Graders. Each Fifth Grade author read the carefully written, illustrated, and bound copies of their books to the child for whom the book had been dedicated. Since, in most cases, this was the first book the Fifth Grade student had written, this writer was astonished at the ease at which they would give away such precious volumes to children they did not know. Pride in authorship must have been the sustaining factor!

Since it was a short month with many extra holiday activities planned, no "Idea Sheets" were sent to the teachers.

Month of January

Final typing of the literary magazine was completed. Layout and assembling of stories, poems, songs, mazes, book and movie reviews as well as artwork for the magazine was completed and sent to the high school to be printed. Distribution to all Third and Fourth Graders as well as one copy to each staff member was arranged. The principal also sent a copy to the superintendent, the curriculum coordinator, and each school board member. (See Appendix G.)

The third marking period session of the Writing Club started January 23 with 13 students enrolled, eight of them original members.

The bulletin board with student stories was changed, the publishing center continued, and a notice was sent to the primary grade teachers concerning the literary magazine. (See Appendix F.)

A copy of the article "How well can first graders write?" by Sheila Friedman (1986) was sent to Kindergarten, First and Second Grade teachers.

Month of February

The author who would be coming to the school was contacted through her parents after a final date was set for her visit. It was decided that a Young Authors conference on Saturday was impractical at this time because not enough adults were willing to come on a Saturday with minimal reimbursement. An alternate plan was agreed upon.

The article "Journal writing: Stages of development" by Lenore Kintisch (1986) was sent to the teachers.

Bulletin board displays were changed. The publishing center continued.

A reunion of the members of the graduate writing course was held with members describing successful implementation of strong writing programs in their individual classrooms.

Month of March

Bulletin board displays were changed, the publishing center continued, and the fourth marking period session of Writing Club started March 19 with 16 children signing up. (See Appendix H.) Although this exceeded by one child the original limit set, it was decided that with a minor change in routine, the extra child could be accommodated.

A cartoon demonstrating the editing process on page 80 of Recipes for Writing: Motivation, Skills, and Activities by Murray Suid and Wanda Lincoln (1989) was the "Idea Sheet"

sent to the teachers.

Month of April

Displays were changed, the publishing center continued, Writing Club continued, and the "Idea Sheet" sent to teachers was designed to be sent to parents at the teachers' discretion. The column "Working With Parents" in the February, 1991 issue of The Reading Teacher was condensed by some teachers and sent home with their monthly newsletters. Other teachers sent home parts of the column, some teachers summarized it, and other teachers ignored it.

A short note reminding the primary teachers of the deadline for the literary magazine was sent.

Month of May

Final collection of primary students' work for the literary magazine was completed, sent to the parent volunteer typist, and artwork was copied and reduced to fit the pages. After layout was finished, pages were sent to the high school for printing.

This writer was asked to give a workshop entitled "Writing and Whole Language" at the district inservice "choice" day. Eleven teachers attended, ranging from kindergarten to high school.

The young author was contacted and final plans were discussed for a June 4 visitation to coincide with the last day of Writing Club.

The last change for the bulletin board display was made and the publishing center finished the last books during the last week in May.

The last article sent to teachers was a reprint from The National Institute of Education entitled "10 Ways to Improve Writing Skills".

Month of June

The literary magazine was stapled and distributed to all students in Kindergarten, First, and Second Grades with copies sent to all staff members, the superintendent, and the curriculum coordinator.

Parents were invited to a Young Authors Picnic on June 3. Children were invited to bring books, short stories, and poems that they wrote to share with their families. Some classes held "Literary Open House" either immediately before or after the picnic to showcase more children's writing. Parents read and signed books, authors gave autographs and explained how they got their ideas, and "all about the author" pieces written by the children were posted around the room. The hallways of the school were filled with

stories, poems, essays, reports, and their accompanying artwork.

The visiting author, Amity Gaige, came on June 4 and exceeded expectations with her effect on the children and teachers who observed her. She gave two assemblies for Third and Fourth Graders, visited this writer's First Grade class, and worked with the Writing Club after school. Everyone was impressed with her poise and facility with children while she fired them with the desire to write.

School ended on June 10.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There had been a low priority given to the teaching of writing in most of the classrooms in the K-4 elementary school in which this writer teaches and few occasions for children to experience authentic writing opportunities. The goal of the writer is for the children to become more fluent writers and for the teachers to expand their knowledge of the writing process in order to teach writing more profitably. Specific objectives include providing greater opportunities for children to write and display their writing publicly and providing opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge about the writing process.
To encourage children to write and teachers to feel more comfortable teaching writing, the following specific strategies were implemented during the school year:

A graduate level course in writing was offered to the teachers within the school district, taught by the Curriculum Coordinator and assisted by this writer. Articles and "Idea Sheets" concerning the writing process were distributed. A literary magazine of children's writing was organized and published with the help of parent volunteers. An after-school Writing Club was offered to Third and Fourth Grade students interested in writing. A bulletin board near

the office entitled "Young Authors" was installed and student authors were highlighted; the contents were changed monthly. A prize-winning teenaged author spent half a day in the school giving assemblies, speaking to classes and working with children. A publishing center was established.

Specific objectives were designed to provide greater opportunities for children to write and display their writing publicly and furnish opportunities for teachers to increase their knowledge about the writing process. Each objective is listed below followed by the results related to that specific objective.

Objective 1: By the end of the school-year implementation period, students will have more of their writing displayed in the school. Evaluation will be formative, with the expectation being that a greater amount of children's writing will be displayed as the year continues. The standard of achievement is that by the last month of implementation, 50% of student-displayed work in the hallways will be children's writing.

Objective 1 was measured by counting all of the pieces of student work that were displayed in the hallways of the school on a given day. Data for evaluation was taken at four times during the year: in November, January, March, and May. The expectation was that as the teachers learned more about the writing process, there would be a greater emphasis on

children's writing and this would be reflected in the amount of written work displayed. The desired outcome was that by the last evaluation period, at least 50% of the work displayed would be students' writing.

Table 3 displays the results of counting the items of student work. Since data was first collected at the end of the first marking period, a dramatic increase over the number of writing samples compared to the spring of 1991 is noted.

Table 3

Number of Items in Hallway Displays

Month	Children's writing*	Non-writing
November	263	242
January	351	129
March	237	188
May	402	125

*Writing is defined here as at least five consecutive words comprising meaning. Although many of the non-writing items were labeled, they did not meet this definition.

In contrast to the baseline data as gathered in the spring of 1991, this objective of at least 50% student written work was met with ease in each of the four months. Although there was a downturn in March on the total number

of displays, the percentage of student writing is nevertheless greater than 50%. What the tabled data does not reveal is the amount of dictation done by pre-writers. For example, the May evaluation was done just four school days before the Young Authors Picnic and the principal had announced that he would like as much writing as possible displayed. Almost every one of the 125 pieces of non-writing noted on that day was a teacher generated/child dictated response.

Objective 2: Students will write in many different styles and formats as exhibited in various publications and writing activities. Evaluation will be by counting the number of children who submit material for publication and standard of achievement will be that 50% of the children in Grades 1-4 will contribute at least one piece of writing for publication or display by the end of the school year.

Objective 2 was measured by counting the number of children who submitted work for publication outside of regular classroom assignments. Evaluation was ongoing since the children were counted all during the year. Desired outcome was that by the end of the year, 50% of the children registered in Grades 1-4 would have submitted writing for publication or display outside of whole-class assignments.

Most of the writing done is school by children is to fulfill the requirements of an assignment. However, Words of

Wonder, the literary magazine produced this year, afforded a vehicle for children to write on their own. Few of the submissions were obvious class assignments. If they were assignments, they were open-ended such as "write a mystery." Counting the number of children who wrote for Words of Wonder, 369 children out of a Grade 1-4 total of 407 children chose to write for the intermediate or primary edition of the magazine.

Objective 3: Teachers will report an increased understanding of the writing process as evidenced through open-ended interviews, a questionnaire, and/or learning logs kept by some of the teachers. The standard of achievement will be that all of the responding teachers will report an increased understanding of diverse components of the writing process and how they relate to the teaching of writing.

Objective 3 was measured by ascertaining the degree of confidence that the teachers had in their teaching of writing. Evaluation was during December and at the end of the school year through the use of open-ended interviews, a questionnaire (see Appendix D), and in some cases, the use of learning logs or journals. The desired level of achievement was that all responding teachers would express more confidence in their ability to teach writing because of an increase in their knowledge of the writing process.

The most enthusiastic responses came from the members of the graduate course in writing who were asked to writing their opinions of the class and suggestions for future classes. Unfortunately none of the class members were teachers in this particular school but without exception, they were very complimentary about the course and this writer's contributions. At a "reunion" of the class held in February, they all reported in glowing terms how much their children loved to write and how much more confident they were about teaching writing.

One of the questionnaires used to collect baseline data (See Appendix B) was used as one of the evaluation instruments for this objective. Out of 21 classroom teachers, 15 responded. Every teacher who responded said that their children wrote at least three times a week. Some of the teachers added comments on the back and all of them were very positive.

"I never knew how much they liked to write until I asked them to every day and nobody groaned."

"The kids were thrilled to see their stories published in the literary magazine. Thanks for doing all that work."

"My kids can't wait to be in your Writing Club next year. They love to write!" (Second Grade teacher)

"Now they love to write. Can you do something about the social studies program?!"

The answers to the survey form (see Appendix D) were not as clearcut. Only six teachers out of 19 responded and most still demonstrated ambiguity in the replies. This should have been expected, however, because a little bit of knowledge often leads one to the realization of how much more there is to know about the subject.

With one exception, all of the teachers were very impressed with the teenaged author that came to speak to the Third and Fourth Grades. Many children asked for the rules to the contest that she had won that enabled her to publish her book of poetry and photographs and teachers reported that the following day many children brought in examples of stories and poems they had written following her inspiring talk.

Objective 4: Teachers will demonstrate an understanding of a child's sense of "ownership" in the written work by displaying more student-initiated writing. Evidence will be obtained by observation of bulletin boards and displays within the classrooms and the standard of achievement will be that half of the teachers will display examples of writing that is student-initiated.

Objective 4 was measured by observation and enumeration of student writing on bulletin boards and displays within the classrooms. The standard of achievement was that half of the teachers in the school would display examples of writing

that is student-initiated during the evaluation period in May.

To satisfy the principal's announcements and expectations, all teachers increased the public display of student writing in the hallway. However, the classroom is the teacher's last bastion of control and, except for the annual evaluation, no supervisor sees the inside of a particular teacher's classroom in any detail. Therefore, this writer concluded that this evaluation method would be a strict test of how much writing was going on in the school.

Evaluation was done at the beginning of May, well before the Young Authors Picnic. Every classroom was surveyed in Grades 1-4 either before or after the school day. Out of 19 teachers, 18 had three or more examples of student written work displayed. Of the 18 teachers who displayed written work, nine of them had a variation on the Young Authors bulletin board in the front of the school. Examples of displays included "Future Authors", "Just Published...", "Once Upon a Time" and "Blitzer Prize Winners" (in Mrs. Blitzer's Third Grade).

Objective 5: Children will recognize the importance of writing in the school as evidenced by a questionnaire showing that a greater percentage of children acknowledge the value of writing than they did in the spring of 1991.

Objective 5 was measured by having the children complete a questionnaire (Appendix C) that asks them to choose which subjects their teachers think are of first, second, and third importance. The desired behavior was that 50% of the children polled will report that their teacher values writing in one of the top three positions of importance. The expectation is that with the added emphasis on writing in the school, the greater recognition of student authors, and the increased confidence of teachers in their knowledge of the writing process, children would credit writing as having a more important place in the curriculum and thus of more value to their teachers.

Table 4 on the following page shows the results of this survey of eight classrooms representing Grades 1-4.

Table 4

What subject do you think is most important to your teacher?

Subject	Number of children responding=164 Most important	Second	Third
Reading	60	21	15
Spelling	26	39	23
Writing	16	22	33
Social Studies	25	25	16
Math	12	18	32
Handwriting	16	19	19
Science	8	15	21
English	0	5	4
Others (written in)	1	0	1

Although the results of this questionnaire did not meet the objective set forth, a comparison with the baseline questionnaire given in the spring of 1991 shown on page 9 shows a definite increase in the value of writing as perceived by the students. Baseline data shows that only 46 out of 175 children or 26% thought their teachers valued writing among the top three subjects. This table shows that 71 out of 164 or 43% thought their teachers valued writing among the top three subjects. Whereas in 1991 the children saw writing as the seventh (out of eight) most important

subject, in 1992 they elevated it to third place. In addition, the methods of taking children to publication may have had a bearing on how much of a priority was given handwriting. For example, this writer typed the children's stories after the revision stage, eliminating the time-consuming task of handwriting a final copy. However, most teachers asked for a "good copy" at this point which had to be handwritten by the students. Through experience, this writer has found that some children will write very short pieces knowing that they will be copying them over a number of times and they wish to avoid this laborious task.

One other problem with this questionnaire had to do with the sampling methods. Because some of the teachers present in 1991 were no longer in the school, I was unable to survey the same classrooms and this could have had a bearing on the results.

A final bit of data had not been accounted for: the impact of the Writing Club on the children who joined. Without exception, the parents thanked this writer profusely at the end and reported how much their children enjoyed it. Third Graders as well as Second Graders stopped this writer in the hall to ask if they could join next year. Two children sent small gifts on the last day of school and two others wrote notes and poems expressing how much it meant to

them. One of the boys has volunteered to be the typist next year for the club since he saw how much time that entailed.

Discussion

The results of this practicum succeeded in allowing the teaching of writing to have a higher priority in most of the classrooms in the K-4 elementary school in which this writer teaches and afforded more occasions for children to experience authentic writing opportunities. The goal of the writer for the children to become more fluent writers and for the teachers to expand their knowledge of the writing process in order to teach writing more profitably were achieved.

A review of the literature shows that when teachers concentrate on teaching writing and allow children the freedom to write about topics in which they are interested, the confidence of both teacher and student increase. Keller (1992) says, "I wanted my students to see writing as much more than just a way of practicing spelling." Allowing children to make mistakes is as much a part of writing as using punctuation and capitals. Blough (1992) insists "first, let's emphasize reading and writing--the essentials of literacy. The refinements can come later." (p. 56) Murray maintains that "we [should] teach our students to write by allowing them to experience the process of writing. There is no way we can tell what our students will need to write in

their lives beyond the classroom, but we can give our students a successful experience in the writing process." (p. 20)

Teachers who wish to implement writing programs in their classrooms will wish to read Classroom Experiences: The writing process in action edited by Naomi Gordon (1984). Teachers at each of the elementary grade levels describe the experiences they had as they attempted to fashion a classroom of writers.

On the other hand, Hillocks (1986a, 1986b, 1987) is the foremost advocate of task-specific knowledge and direct instruction of writing for specific types of assignments. Thus the teacher who, after having her class read a number of mystery stories discussed the who, what, where, when, why of the mystery, is following both Murray's and Hillocks' advice to some extent when the assignment she gives is "write a mystery". Hillocks is correct in saying that knowledge of task-specific strategies are important in writing, but this is not the only important concern. Certainly more is at work than task-specific strategies that Hillocks' meta-analysis of experimental research promotes.

Smagorinsky's (1991) study recommends a combination of both task-specific procedures and what he calls "the general procedures approach" as described by Murray, Calkins, and Graves and is referred to as process writing in most of the literature.

> Both the general procedures of freewriting and brainstorming and the task-specific procedures of generating criteria from problematic examples appeared to give students strategies for producing the particular elements stressed in the model essays, with task-specific procedures having a stronger effect on improving students' purposeful composing and with both procedural treatments enabling students to think critically about the concepts being defined. (p. 359)

He furthermore elaborates on the time-consuming nature of both methods and suggests that "instruction in general composing procedures might be a good alternative in that they are relatively effective in improving writing yet not quite so demanding on teachers' time." (p. 360)

For middle elementary students the suggestions made by Freeman (1991) concerning the use of informational books as models for student report writing may be helpful. Many of the samples of student writing displayed in the hall were non-fiction, clearly written to satisfy a teacher's requirement. However, pieces chosen by teachers to be placed on the Young Authors bulletin boards and submissions for the literary magazine, were, with few exceptions, fiction.

Time will tell whether the interest in writing instigated by the implementation of this practicum will be sustained in the future. The Writing Club will definitely be continued since that is under the direct control of this

writer. The publishing center will continue for the upcoming school year but due to the expected shortage of space in the school in the following years, it remains to be seen whether this incentive for children's writing will endure.

Unanticipated outcomes were the positive responses from the majority of the staff. Usually the principal's goals for the year are seen as one more piece of public relations gimmickry. However, with a few exceptions, most teachers tentatively or enthusiastically asked their children to write more often and the impressive results fueled even greater efforts. Parents reported that their children were making books at home and some of these efforts were brought to school to share with teachers and fellow students. Teachers wanted further training in the teaching of writing and asked this writer's opinion about local writing courses they could take during the summer.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Young Authors board be a continuing feature in the school. Children were eager to be recognized for this honor.

2. It is recommended that the Writing Club be continued since its popularity increased during the year as more children saw publication of their stories.

3. It is recommended that an inservice be given on bookbinding since classroom binding will allow more children to have their writing "published" and the process is not difficult. Bookbinding by the children in this writer's First Grade has been a feature of that language arts program for many years. This classroom publishing effort is especially important since the publishing center will likely be discontinued after the upcoming school year due to lack of space.

4. It is recommended that teachers be trained in more methods of teaching writing than through the writing process. Although this is a satisfactory method for beginning writers in the importance of increasing fluency, some direct instruction would be beneficial for the younger students and especially for the middle elementary grades.

5. It is recommended that a literary magazine be compiled periodically, perhaps once every four years, since that would allow every child to experience the opportunity once during his/her elementary career, Grades 1-4. Since it is a major project to attempt, once every four years would not be as formidable a task as to attempt an annual magazine.

6. It is recommended that a computer lab be available for the North building since it the only building without such a facility. This would permit the greater use of word processing software such as Kidwriter, The Children's Writing and Publishing Center and Bank Street Writer.

7. It is recommended that public celebrations of students' literary contributions continue and that suggestions for classroom Authors' Tea or Authors' Open House be circulated.

Dissemination

This practicum has been shared with the reading specialist, the Curriculum Supervisor, and the Superintendent of the writer's school district. In addition, the Staff Development Specialist has requested a copy of this report with the intent of possible dissemination of parts of it to pertinent faculty members.

This writer will share the results of the practicum with any other teacher who desires to increase the opportunities for children to write and display their writing publicly.

This writer will offer to share selected sections of the practicum at inservice workshops. Bookbinding and other methods of publication would be a suitable possibility for practical "hands on" workshops.

This writer is willing to share the results of this practicum with undergraduate or graduate students in early childhood, elementary education, or reading/language arts programs.

This writer is exploring the possibilities of publishing portions of the practicum in various journals and magazines such as Language Arts and Instructor.

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APPENDIX A

TEACHERS' NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Dear Fellow Teachers,

I am interested in finding information about how teachers feel about teaching writing. If you would care to take the time to fill out this questionnaire and put it in my box, I would appreciate it. Thank you. 71

Wendy Brand

Check any statements that you agree with:

_____The children in my classroom are provided with sufficient time for writing.

_____I feel that I am knowledgeable about the writing process and can impart this to my students.

_____I would like additional information about teaching writing. I would like information about the following:

_____How to provide more time to teach writing.

_____Steps involved in the writing process.

_____Writing in the content areas.

_____Ways to conference with children concerning their writing.

_____Classroom journals.

_____A bibliography of books about how to teach writing.

_____Word processing for students.

_____Poetry writing with children.

_____Suggestions for what children could write about.

_____Teacher response and/or writing groups.

_____Invented spelling development.

_____"Publishing" children's writing.

_____Other subjects concerning writing. Please specify.

Comments: (Use the back if necessary.)

APPENDIX B

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for responding so positively to my last questionnaire. More of the results of any of these questionaires are seen by administration; they are only for the purposes of gathering data for my practicum. If you would be so kind as to fill out another short one, I would really be appreciative. 73

Nancy Brand

Please check the statement that most closely fits your classroom. I am attempting to find out about the frequency of writing in actual classrooms.

On the average, my children write stories or essays

_____Nearly every day

_____About 3 times a week

_____About once a week

_____Two or 3 times a month

_____About one a month

If the ideal circumstances were to appear (more time, more energy, smaller classes, etc.) how often would you have your students write stories or essays? Please check one.

_____Every day

_____About 3 times a week

_____Two or 3 times a month

_____About once a month

Do your children write in the content areas of math, science or social studies? How often do they write more than short answers to test or chapter questions?

_____Nearly every day

_____About 3 times a week

_____Two or 3 times a month

_____About once a month

_____Less than once a month

Thank you very much for your responses. Please return this form to me in my mailbox.

APPENDIX C

CHILDREN'S QUESTIONNAIRE:

WHAT SUBJECT DO YOUR TEACHERS THINK IS

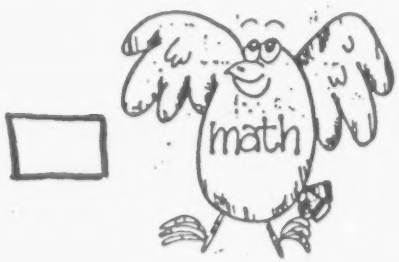
THE MOST IMPORTANT?

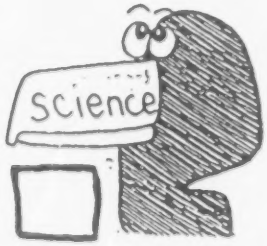
Write a 1 next to the subject <u>your teacher</u> thinks is the most important.

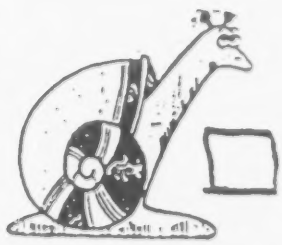
75

Write a 2 next to the subject <u>your teacher</u> thinks is the next most important.

Write a 3 next to the subject <u>your teacher</u> thinks is the third most important.







You <u>do not</u> have to sign your name.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX D

PROCESS WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Fellow Teachers,

I am interested in finding information about how teachers feel about teaching writing. If you would care to take the time to fill out this questionnaire and put it in my box, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Wendy Brand

Please write the number that best describes how confident you are concerning your knowledge of components of the writing process.

1= I feel quite confident about this area.
2= I feel somewhat confident about this area.
3= I need more information about this area.
4= I do not understand about this area.

_____Steps involved in the writing process.

_____How to provide more time to teach writing.

_____Student "ownership" of the writing.

_____Techniques and strategies for prewriting.

_____Techniques to encourage student revision.

_____Editing by the student.

_____Writing in the content areas.

_____Ways to conference with children concerning their writing.

_____Peer conferencing.

_____Classroom journals and learning logs.

_____Word processing for students.

_____Suggestions for writing topics.

_____Invented spelling development.

_____"Publishing" children's writing.

_____Additional resources about the writing process.

_____Teacher response or writing groups.

Comments: (Use the back if necessary.)

APPENDIX E

NEWSPAPER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Year of the Young Author

"The Year of the Young Author" is the theme for P V North Elementary School during the 1991-92 school year during which many different activities are being planned.

Prime Time Night, an evening of reading and fun coordinated by Mrs. Nancy Huston, was a popular activity last year. This year the children will be asked to also bring books that they have written so that others might enjoy them. A publishing center will be set up through which the children can "publish" their books at various times during the year. A literary magazine is planned with the first issue in January comprised of contributions by third and fourth graders and an issue in June with stories, poems and drawings from the primary children. A Writing Club will be offered after school once a week for third and fourth graders who would like to further explore their literary interests. A Young Author's Conference for "published" authors Grades One through Four will be held on a Saturday in April with a celebrity author and many workshops to interest all who enjoy writing and reading. A special bulletin board near the office will celebrate various young authors during the year. And as the year's culminating activity, the annual P V North picnic will feature our young authors reading their literary works to their parents.

The Year of the Young Author promises to be an exciting and enjoyable learning experience for the entire school community.

APPENDIX F

LITERARY MAGAZINE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Name That Magazine Contest

Dear Students,

To help celebrate the Year of the Young Author at PV North this year, you will have the opportunity to be published in our school's literary magazine. If you have a short story, a poem, a movie or book review that you are proud of and would like others to see, give it to your teacher or bring it to Room 36 and give it to Mrs. Brand. Be sure your name and your teacher's name is on it. The issue coming out in January will feature work by Third and Fourth Graders and the June issue will feature work from students in Kindergarten, First, and Second Grade.

Now for the Contest! We need a name and a picture for the front of the magazine. You may send in a suggestion for only a name or only a picture for the front or both together. Pictures should be in black and white just as the pictures for the fairytale calendar were done. The winning entries will not only get the satisfaction of seeing <u>your</u> ideas in print, but also a coupon for a snack of your choice from the cafeteria. So start thinking of a name for our school literary magazine and drawing pictures for the cover. Put your name on all entries (you may enter more than once) and give them to your teacher. All entries must be in by Tuesday November 19. So get those creative juices flowing and think of ideas for stories, poems, and names for the magazine.

Mrs. Brand

January 17

Dear Teachers of K, 1, 2:

Now that the intermediate edition of the literary magazine has been "put to bed," I am collecting stories, pictures, poems, book and movie reviews for the primary edition to come out shortly after Memorial Day. Stories need not be edited closely, but please make sure all invented spelling can be deciphered. Pictures should correspond to stories or poems, not just art-for-art's-sake. (That's a different magazine for another year, perhaps.) Please have teacher's name as well as child's first and last name on each submission. (Class submissions just have to be labeled once.) Kindergarten may want to submit class experience stories. Every child in Kindergarten, First and Second Grade will receive a copy of the magazine regardless of whether or not they submit a story.

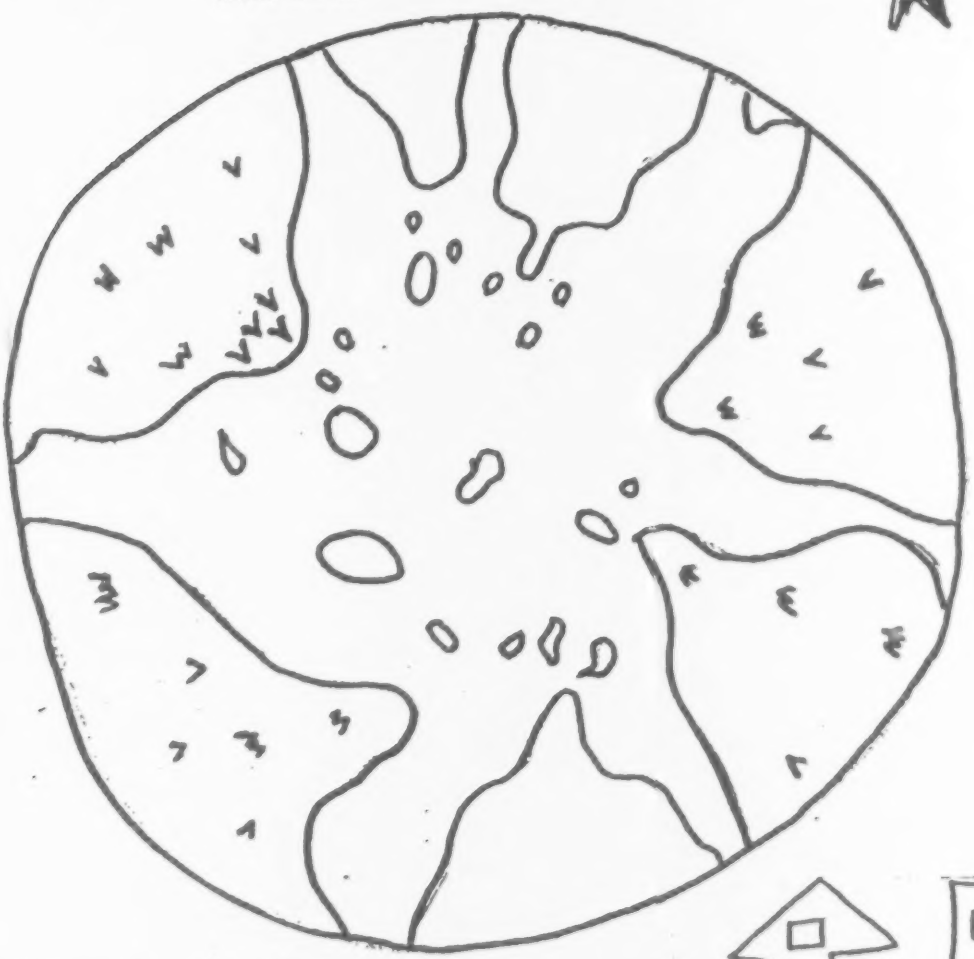
I will collect writing and drawings anytime up to May 1. Faith needs to have time to type. Thanks.

Wendy Brand

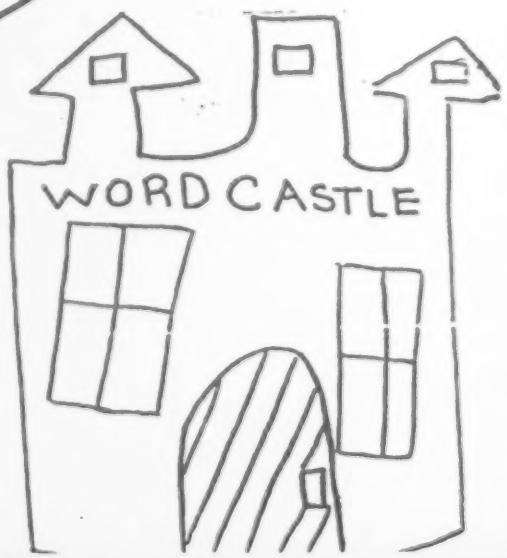
APPENDIX G

TITLE PAGES OF THE LITERARY MAGAZINE

Words of Wonder



PV North Elementary
Literary Magazine
Intermediate Grades
January, 1992



Words of Wonder

PV North Elementary

Primary Edition

June, 1992

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE OF ANNOUNCEMENT FOR WRITING CLUB

Dear Writing Club Member,

This is the last day of Third Period Writing Club. Next week starts Fourth Marking Period Writing Club. The cost for you is $12; the cost for new members is $15.

For the last marking period, we will be doing something a bit different in Writing Club. We will still be writing every week, but instead of assuming that everything you write will be worth publishing (that is not realistic in real life even by professional authors), you will be writing until you finally think you have one piece <u>really worth</u> revising, polishing, and publishing. We'll talk more about that next week.

The last afternoon of Writing Club, Thursday June 4, we will have a special guest. Miss Amity Gaige from Reading who is the author of <u>We Are a Thunderstorm</u>, an award-winning book of poetry and photographs, will be here to look at our writing and help with revisions and give us some tips. So make sure you don't miss that day.

Mrs. Brand